

ART, DEMOCRATISM AND FUNDAMENTAL DEMOCRACY

An exploration of the New World Summit

Jonas Staal

1. What Do We Mean When We Say “Art”?

In order to answer the question what we mean when we use the word “art”, I believe we should first address the ideological context within which the word art is articulated and operational.

Owing to the sustained frontal attack of Dutch extreme-right politicians on contemporary artists and art institutions, which they claim to be propaganda for the left – or whatever is left of the left – the word “art” has in the Netherlands now indefinitely lost its “sovereign” status. It seems that, uncomfortably enough, the extreme right has a point. The terminology that they use to disqualify art, such as the now infamous concept of art as a “leftist hobby,” may be obscene, but the fact of the matter is that the current Dutch cultural infrastructure is rooted in a clearly ideologically defined era. Owing to the extreme-right discourse, the word “art” has today returned to its place in a long forgotten social-democratic post-WWII policy.

This policy described the task of the cultural infrastructure as spreading art and culture to the entire population. The social-democrats perceived art to be a form of knowledge that belonged to the shared collective project of building a new civilization, rather than art being the property of an aristocratic minority that had ruled the old world which had collapsed in totalitarianism.¹ But even though the extreme right justifiably considers art to be propaganda for the left, their discourse lacks precision and historical awareness. Nonetheless, they are right that the values that we attribute in artistic discourse to the role of art in society, finds its roots in this specific, social-democratic tradition. A project of democratizing knowledge, which I in essence support. However, the conditions under which this democratization was supposed to take place ended up obfuscating precisely what was at stake – the project became incorporated in the worldwide expansion of capitalist democracy, reducing art to a state run tool to provide incentive for so-called “creative industries” – and it took the intervention of the extreme right to reassert the ideological core of the Dutch cultural infrastructure.

It was in the context of this specific social-democratic project that the Dutch artist was able to gain his celebrated freedom: the idea of the artist and art itself as *sovereign*. This idea is precisely the one I object to: the idea of sovereign artistic freedom masks the *essential political task* attributed to art as a form of knowledge and knowledge distribution. This idea is a remainder of the post-WWII cultural infrastructure which was meant to provide artists with the means to create their work unrestrained by political influence. Unrestricted by the propagandistic use that the Nazi regime – which today remains the symbolic embodiment of 20th century totalitarianism – had made of the arts. It is this *fear of propaganda* that has obscured the essentially ideological project that art embarked upon. This fear created a depoliticized art, believing it was sovereign yet serving a specifically political goal.

As a result, the Dutch cultural infrastructure was created with the unacknowledged aim to formalize the ideal of democratic freedom, with which the newly risen “enlightened” West distinguished itself both in space from the East and in time from its blood-soaked past. By establishing the role of the artist as the symbol of democratic civilization and freedom, it was not so much the *artist’s work* that mattered, but the *unrestrained existence of the artist within the democratic state itself*. It is not the artist that sculpts society, but it is the artist himself who is sculpted based on a vision of the post-WWII democratic state.

We encounter here the underlying principle of the doctrine of artistic freedom: if the democratic state grants freedom to the artist, it does so at a double profit. First– it makes each and every artist into a living statue of liberty; they become a propagandistic tool merely because the state sponsors their free existence.² But second, and most importantly, *the state is at the same no longer directly responsible for the results that the artist produces*.

Whenever politicians do take direct responsibility for artistic productions they are met with heavy criticism, as the image of the propagandist continues to hunt their proximity with artistic practice. Even though we know that the real curator of the cultural infrastructure is the state, acknowledging this situation would dispel the systematically sustained smokescreen of artistic sovereignty, as a pillar of democratic freedom. The politician is the man behind the curtain that shapes the artist in its vision of a statue of liberty, but this gesture that *presupposes* the artwork can never be acknowledged in public. As it would show this to be a freedom not “autonomous,” not “universal,” but bound in the specific material conditions of the democratic doctrine.

The French philosopher Jacques Ellul speaks of our technologically driven society in terms of total propaganda. The biggest achievement of *total propaganda* is that even those in power – those who commission the artists to become the living statues of liberty, the avant-garde of the democratic state – have come to believe their actions and policies have nothing to do with propaganda. Their statues of

liberty, their armies of artists, are nothing but the “natural” outcome of the struggle of democracy over totalitarianism. Propaganda is thus “total” at the moment it becomes the only possible truth, “just the way we do things.”³ And thus we march on, artists and politicians, in line with an ideological composition that none of us is capable of remembering why and how it ever came in to being. We are serving freedom. But *who’s freedom* we’re serving has long been obscured.

2. Democratism

From the moment that the Dutch post-war doctrine of artistic freedom was translated into a cultural infrastructure, we have witnessed the rise of a form of propaganda that solely serves what is best referred to as “democratism.” When working in Japan with philosopher Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei in 2009, we discovered that the word “democracy” did not originally exist in the Japanese language. As Japan gained its “independence” as a result of the imposition of a constitution drafted by the United States this “democracy” had to be somehow articulated in words. It then occurred to us that the neologism used as a translation for the word democracy, in the Japanese language (minshushugi), translates as an “ism” (-shugi), just like “capitalism,” “relativism,” or “Marxism.” As *democratism*. Democracy is therefore no longer a neutral foundation for a variety of other ideologies to manifest itself, but can be understood as an *ideology itself* – as one of the many ‘isms’ that the world is already familiar with..⁴

Democratism indicates the translation of the constantly self-reassessing emancipatory principles of democracy into a stagnant, non-reflexive ideology of administration and governance. Of core importance is a series of monopolies that democratism *enacts*, namely the monopoly on violence, the monopoly on representation, the monopoly on information and the monopoly on history. I would argue that, despite art’s claims as a form of knowledge production and source of alternative histories, it is within the context of democratism impotently trapped in its doctrine of sovereignty: the painful truth is that exactly because art is considered free, it cannot refer to anything but the status quo of democratism itself. It can thus engage in anything, except in disrupting exactly these democratist monopolies. It can be anything, *except democratic*.

The Dutch cultural infrastructure is obviously not the only propagandistic product in systematic denial of its own ideological agenda. We may for example point to a notorious CIA funded project during the Cold War, the “Congress for Cultural Freedom,” which among others had the task of globally promoting the works of American abstract expressionist artists, in response to the pictorial regime of socialist realism as the officially sanctioned art of the Soviet Union. A unique form of artistic state funding in the history of the United States which historian Frances Stonor Saunders has described as the “Deminform.”⁵

Through the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the notion of “abstract art” was transformed into a synonym of “free art.” Even though the American public at large was not at all charmed by the works of the abstract expressionists, this abstraction allowed democratism in the context of the Cold War to be depicted as the “natural” outcome of centuries of social struggles *exactly by ruling out all depiction*. The work of Jackson Pollock, this weapon of the Cold War, is the ultimate figurative representation of the incapacity of the artist to understand his role as instrument of democratism. This implies that I do not acknowledge his work as abstract, but that I perceive it as a series of figurations that we are supposed to recognize as “abstraction.”

We are in permanent need of a critique of ideology in order to identify the types of infrastructure that convey the real meaning to our work as artist, to understand them so we can change them. But how to know the types of propaganda that we are dealing with in a state of total propaganda? Terry Eagleton evaluates this condition as follows: “The most efficient oppressor is the one who persuades his underlings to love, desire and identify with his power: and any practice of political emancipation thus involves that most difficult of all forms of liberation: freeing ourselves from ourselves.”⁶ The difficulty today, in the condition of total propaganda as described by Ellul is that there is no longer anyone who even identifies him or herself as the person in power, let alone as the oppressor...

Within what we would currently consider as “traditional” propaganda, we may already find the clues of the way in which Ellul’s total propaganda will come to assert itself. In the classic 1942 Donald Duck cartoon “Der Führer’s Face” Donald finds himself as a Nazi in Germany, where he eats bread made of wood, works 24 hours per day, with only minor breaks during which he enjoys a fake mountainous background, before being forced back into the weapons factory where he is enslaved by the Nazi industry. When Donald mentally crashes due to the excessive workload, he wakes up in his own bed. Upon realizing it was just a dream, he suddenly sees the shadow of what seems to be a Nazi officer saluting him – convinced that his own country has now been taken over as well; Donald immediately returns the shadow’s Nazi salute. At that moment he realizes that he is actually standing in front of the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, and thus reassured he calmly returns to sleep. But at this specific moment – the moment in which one totalitarian doctrine is confronted with another, in which the Nazi salute is for a brief moment equated with the Statue of Liberty’s pose – the film provides a brilliant criticism of our *lack of tools* to recognize the condition of total propaganda in contemporary democratism.

3. From Institutional Critique to Fundamental Democracy

The betrayal of emancipatory principles in the imagery of democratism’s propaganda, has been addressed most valuably in the artistic research that we

call Institutional Critique. This ongoing research started in the sixties of the last century. Artists simply stopped producing and exhibiting objects, trying instead to shed light on the politics of their own practice as well as the politics of the institution representing – thus framing – their practice. What became central in their practice were thus the conditions allowing them to become instrumentalized as the living statues of liberty for Deminform, rather than the services they were providing in its interests. The artists involved in Institutional Critique thus engaged in an emancipatory project, recognizing themselves as part of the art institution, as complicit to the “democratic” state and “free” market regimes that defined art’s political, economic, and overall ideological framing. What we are witnessing here is a beginning of a fundamental self-critique *within* the Deminform.

Artists engaged in Institutional Critique demanded to establish their own framing, not as autonomous, “sovereign” units but as political beings. “We are all always already serving,” are the words of Andrea Fraser,⁷ an artist that was part of the “second wave” – the second generation – of artists engaged in Institutional Critique. Fraser in this context speaks of art’s “relative autonomy”. Exactly because art deals with the historical question of what it means to “represent,” it is in the context of Institutional Critique never “just representing,” but always reflective of the context in which it positions itself. It is in this “reflexivity” of art, a result of its relative autonomy, that we, as artists, should add to Fraser’s question “Whom we are serving” the question “*Whom do we want to be serving?*” In other words: “*within which political project do we desire to situate our practice?*”

What was revolutionary in Institutional Critique was the demand of transparency, partly through self-critique, of the conditions that define the role of the artist in a larger political, economic and ideological specter. But today the *idea* of transparency has become an inherent part of marketing tactics. Despite structural obscurity obviously remaining, governments and corporations have learned to serve the desire for transparency if they want to avoid critique by journalists or activist organizations that might influence consumer habits. But to their great benefit, our age has thought us that transparency in itself does not change behavior. Insight in the conditions of labor and its inherent mechanisms of exploitation might enhance the schizophrenia of citizen-consumer who would actually *like* to stand on the “right side,” but that does not necessarily mean that they will sacrifice anything of their privileged status (or their dream of ever acquiring such a privileged status, despite their knowledge of what human sacrifices this demands) for this cause. In other words, critique in demand of transparency means nothing if it is not strengthened by the act of positioning, otherwise it runs the risk – like much of Institutional Critique has – to rather *legitimate* the system by showing it “worthy of our critique” (in other words: suggesting that somehow with “enough critique” it would be capable of reforming itself). Amidst the radicality of the crises we face, this tactic is no longer viable. The task of Institutional Critique would rather be to make visible different ideological camps forming as a result of these crises and

then abandoning its notion of “critique” so to make a choice *to which of these camps we want to belong*. To which of these camps *we want to be of service to*. I believe that this should be a political project in which art is not simply instrumentalized by our Deminforms, but in which, vice versa, *politics in its turn is instrumentalized by art*.

A very similar question is addressed by what may probably best be described as the “international democratization movement,” which certainly is not as new as often suggested, although it has *visibly* emerged in the recent years developing its claims in a dialectic movement between a not-so-World Wide Web and the “public” squares of our cities. I believe that this movement’s claims in principle formulate the same demand that Institutional Critique has brought forward, but within a broader political context. These consist in a refusal to continue to operate under the conditions of a domain dictated by unknown others (who moreover deny having any “real” power), and a demand to shape and decide upon these conditions themselves.

Through the Spanish Indignados protests and worldwide Occupy Movement, through the Modern Media Initiative (IMMI) and Wikileaks, through the old Green and the new Pirate Parties we can recognize a single demand: the demand to organize ourselves as political beings. This demand directly confronts the monopolies of democratism. It entails the democratization of our politics, the democratization of our economy, the democratization of our ecology, and the democratization of our public domain. It is a demand to explore the principles of an egalitarian society. Such a society is not the same as a society where everyone has the right to everyone’s belongings, or a society where there is no such thing as a private sphere or intimacy, but it is a society in which the concept of power, the question *how it is constituted and to whom it belongs* is placed into permanent question.

The demands of the worldwide democratization movement take the shape of public spaces where the meaning of this concept of egalitarian society is explored in varying collectives: through protests, squares, as well as virtual spaces. These are platforms where we do not outsource our vote – in Dutch literally meaning “voice”, stem – but where we attempt to shape these ourselves. This concept of democracy as a movement of political beings, not tied to single leaders or dogmas, but through a fidelity to the principles of egalitarianism as a shared emancipatory project, is what I call *Fundamental Democracy*. It is a concept that is irreconcilable with democratism.

This however does not mean that I naively idealize the concrete functioning of the international democratization movement. Having lived on the squares of Occupy Amsterdam with a group of about thirty artists for about three months, I have experienced how protests against a system can turn into its most perverted mirror. Our initiative consisted of a variety of artists, all concerned with the role of art

within the political event. As such, our presence was one exploring an alternative model of the art institution, situated in the camp. What soon was known as the “artist’s tent,” programmed daily reading groups, hosted action committees and organized lectures and classes for art students. But apart from being an urgent democratic experiment, worth to engage with through the mostly educational initiatives of our temporal group, Occupy was just as well the scenery of corruption by abuse of public donations within the Occupy camp, the deployment of excessive bureaucracy in order to wear out political opponents during so called “general assemblies”, of use of violence by so-called voluntary “peace-keepers” who were on night watch, and I speak of nightly deportations from the camp of unwelcome subjects such as psychiatric patients and drug addicts – people who, as philosopher Ernst van de Hemel has rightfully pointed out, were in fact occupying the square *before* the Occupy movement set camp. During those two months I have often said that the only thing that is good about the system that we were opposing, is that no one in the Occupy movement holds a position of power in it.

This does not mean that Occupy has failed. I would call the protest, and many of the phenomena that are part of the international democratization movement, collective social experiments. Occupy, IMMI and Wikileaks, the Green and Pirate Parties: these are not solutions, they are *instruments*. What the international democratization movement represents for me is thus most of all the current will to *start working*. By taking on the task of exploring what fundamental democracy may be through different *social experiments*, we explore what it means to be political beings, however terrifying and disillusioning that sometimes might be. It is in the context of *this project*, that the analysis and thorough self-critique of Institutional Critique becomes of value again, as rather than legitimizing the hand that feeds it first of all contributes to the subverting of power structures that have separated ownership of our world into those with power, and those with none at all. That system is not worthy of our critique any longer: it now needs our subsequent *resistance*.

4. New World Summit

In the past years I have collaborated with other artists, with politicians, political parties, and non-parliamentary political groups in an attempt to answer the question how, from the perspective of an artist’s practice, to use the discursive space opened by Institutional Critique in the service of the demands of fundamental democracy, rather than as another legitimating force of democratism. As a result of these collaborations I founded my artistic and political organization New World Summit, which attempts to structurally oppose a series of monopolies that I described as the pillars of democratist politics. It achieves this by dedicating itself to providing “alternative parliaments” hosting organizations that currently find themselves excluded from democracy, for example by means of so-called international designated terrorist lists.

The first three editions of the “New World Summit” present alternative parliaments for political and juridical representatives of organizations currently placed on so-called international terrorist lists. The terrorist lists comprise organizations that are internationally considered to be state threats. In the European Union, a secret committee, the so-called “Clearing House,” draws up the EU terrorist list. The Clearing House meets bi-annually, in secret and there are no public proceedings of the way decisions are made for the listing of political organizations. One could rightfully say that even by its own standards, the committee that is in charge of placing organizations ‘outside’ of democratism is itself organized in a fundamentally undemocratic manner.⁸ The consequences for the listed organizations and people who are in contact with them include a block on all bank accounts and an international travel ban.

A core characteristic of the New World Summit is that it is an exploration of the potential of an *international parliament*: it has no fixed geographical location, it represents no nation state, no properties or indefinite claims on the right to speak. On the contrary, it defends the demand of each and every political being to represent his or her political beliefs, if willing to do it in the shared space of the summit.



New World Summit logo



New World Summit – Berlin, an overview of the “alternative parliament” of the New World Summit in the Sophiensaele, Berlin, Artist: Jonas Staal, 2012, photo: Lidia Rossner

The first installment of the New World Summit took place on the 4th and 5th of May 2012 in the Sophiensaele, a theater and political platform in Berlin. Invitations to about one hundred organizations mentioned on international terrorist lists were dispatched. From the respondents we were capable of hosting four political representatives, and three juridical representatives, the lawyers of such organizations. The first day of the summit, entitled “Reflections on the Closed Society,” allowed each speaker to hold an uninterrupted lecture on the goal of their organization and the confrontation they experienced with the existence of the international terrorist lists. No intervention from the audience was allowed. The second day, entitled “Proposals for the Open Society,” was based on an interrogation by the audience. As such, I defended the function of the “New World Summit” in these two days as a form of “radical diplomacy,” by on the one hand proposing an unrestricted, albeit shared, platform to the organizations, but on the other hand by demanding political accountability through the similarly unrestricted interrogation by the audience.

The second installment of the New World Summit took place on December 29, 2012, and focused on the political, economic, ideological, and juridical interests that are invested in upholding the notion of the “terrorist” by hosting the keynote speaker Professor Jose Maria Sison, co-founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA). Both

organizations are currently included on “terrorist” lists as a result of their ongoing armed struggle with what they describe as a “semi-colonial and semi-feudal Philippine government,” which is under “US imperialist control” and consists of “comprador bourgeoisie, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists.” Several experts representing the different layers of the system that revolves around this notion of “terrorism,” separating certain organizations and individuals from society, were asked to respond to Sison. In turn, a lawyer, a public prosecutor, a judge, a politician, and a political theorist spoke, each representing a “layer” that separates a civilian (the audience) from a listed civilian (representatives of the CCP and NPA).

The third installment of the New World Summit was held in India, and was planned in an open air pavilion at the Aspen House in Kochi where it would feature a number of representatives of political organizations “banned” from the political arena by the Indian government, who would present lectures on the histories of their organizations, on their political struggles, and gained results, as well as debate their views with each other and the audience. The Indian context shows that there are profound ties between these organizations and the colonial legacy. The many movements in India that continue to fight for the right to self-determination comprise a wide variety of political orientations, including sectarian movements of Sikhs, Muslims, Baptist-Christians, and Hindus, the political movement of the Maoist Naxalites, and the territorial struggles of the indigenous



New World Summit – Berlin, lecture “The Tuareg People’s Right to Self-Determination” by Moussa Ag Assarid, spokesman of the National Liberation Movement of Azawad (MNLA), Artist: Jonas Staal, 2012, photo: Lidia Rossner

peoples of Tripura, Manipur, Assam, and Tamil Nadu. The New World Summit in Kochi was an attempt to make these political struggles, waged across the Indian sub-continent, visible, and an investigation of the relationship between India's history of colonialism and democratization and the organizations currently excluded from the political process.

Only a few weeks after the inauguration of the pavilion, which was built for the summit only, the Fort Kochi Police registered a case against me on January 9, 2013 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act Section 10 (4). The State Intelligence ordered the removal of panels by the Fort Kochi Police depicting the flags of organizations banned in India, which were organized by color in the pavilion. Through the use of black and greys (they obviously lacked enough black paint) they covered twenty of them, leaving five they were not familiar with, but which are listed nonetheless. Interestingly enough, the authorities had no objection to paint over the flags of organizations that they considered to be unrelated to the state, but did follow the abstract color scheme that lies at the basis of each of the alternative parliaments, as we organize the flags by color, not by geographic placement or ideological orientation. The three sides of the pavilion, ordered one side in red, the other in blue, green and yellow, and the last in black and white formed the basis for the authorities to cover lighter flags in grey, and more darker ones in black. So here abstraction, rather than the overall figurative depiction of the



New World Summit – Berlin, lecture “Women and Democracy: The Kurdish Question and Beyond” by Fadile Yildirim (right) and translator Merel Cicek (left), on behalf of the Kurdish feminist movement based on the theoretical work of Abdullah Öcalan, founder of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Artist: Jonas Staal, 2012, photo: Lidia Rossner

flags, shows itself the most powerful in changing behavior of the authorities. They will cover the images of the flags, but they will follow the order of colors as decided by the New World Summit when it comes to this *choreography of censorship*. Thus a parallel with Pollock's performance of democratism becomes visible, only that is not the artist that enacts abstraction on behalf of Deminform, but it's the state itself who's monochromatic *depiction of power* appropriates artistic tools. In other words, the *state paints*.

The intention of the New World Summit is to bypass the existing terrorist laws, by (1) making use of legal tools to move through a variety of juridical gray zones and (2) creating new ones by the use of art. In the case of the New World Summit in Kochi, the success of this approach is tested on the highest imaginable level: by prosecuting the New World Summit through exactly the same law that is used to list certain organizations.

The first, crucially important tool in this process is located in the summit's capability to move geographically. Almost all countries today have an international terrorist list, and allies tend to copy organizations from these lists on request. For example, the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, is in the Netherlands placed on the list at request of the United States government, not because they were aware of any actual threats themselves. But considering the fact that not all countries are allies and not all geopolitical interests are matching, these lists sometimes do not correspond. Hence an organization such as the People's Mujahedin of Iran, an organization basing itself on an interesting combination of Marxism and Islamism, is considered terrorist in the United States but – after a long juridical fight – no longer in the European Union.

The summit started in Berlin and now continues to travel around the world, in the coming months from India to Belgium (September 2014). Each time it enters into a different juridical and political "zone," thus capable of offering a platform to voices that were impossible to host in previous summits. Theoretically, this way the New World Summit – a parliament in flux – at the end of its travel, will have been able to host all organizations placed today on the international terrorist lists.

The New World Summit thus proposes an injection of knowledge suppressed by democratism, brought back into the public sphere by using the second tool that is key in developing this project: the juridically exceptional position of visual art.

The meaning of art's "relative autonomy" may be best highlighted from the perspective of the law. A simple example. In Germany, one of the flags shown in the New World Summit in Berlin, that of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), may not be shown in public spaces such as the Sophiensaele, the location of the summit. A punishment of six months can be given to anyone who breaks this law. But because the parliament of the summit does not organize the flags of the listed

organizations by geographical location or ideological orientation but based on color it is impossible to consider the showing of the PKK flag to be a “single” offense. I claim the flag to be part of a color scheme, of an abstraction that is created by the organization of all flags together. To take out one flag means to destroy the abstraction that is key to the work as an installation. It would mean one would destroy my artwork. Yet, for the invited organizations the “truth” of their flags does not diminish because they are organized by color. These two realities, artistic and political, exist simultaneously: the flags are abstract, and they are the total opposite of abstraction at the same time. These two realities do not deny each other: they exist as a consequence of one another.

Philosopher Vincent van Gerven Oei rearticulated the concept of art’s “relative autonomy” in the context of the New World Summit as art’s “relative illegality.” It is this constructive “state of exception” within a juridical framework that can become an important political tool for people that have been subjected to that other “state of exception”: the one that has placed the organizations “outside” of democratism by help of the international terrorist lists. As such, art’s relative illegality may create new forms of public domain, in which new histories may manifest itself – those many histories that have been suppressed from democratism’s consciousness through the international terrorist lists. These are the histories according to the resistance.

The true cynic might say that the organizations that spoke during the summit were merely “staged” within an artistic contexts, as some type of political objet trouvé, a curiosity.

I will answer this cynicism with a concrete example from the summit. When one of the speakers at the New World Summit, Luis Jalandoni, who spoke on behalf of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People’s Army, took the floor and said “I’m Luis Jalandoni, and that’s my flag” while pointing to the other side of the room, there was no doubt that for him this space was not political *despite* the presence of art but that it was political *exactly because of art*. The space became a political space not simply because I labeled it as such, but because the speakers together with me demanded it to be so. If anything, these organizations were educating us through the urgency with which they brought politics back to the theater. Not as a mere simulacrum of politics in the negative sense of the word, but as the rightful place to speak of the meaning of the concept of representation: to ask the core questions that have made the theater and the politics each other’s ideal birthplace.

News on upcoming editions of the New World Summit, the New World Summit Bureau and the New World Summit Academy for Cultural Activism

<http://www.newworldsummit.eu> This text is an adapted version of a lecture given at the second part of the 3rd Former West Research Congress at the Utrecht School of the Arts, Utrecht (NL)

1 The Dutch historian Kees Vuyk effectively argues that these policies were, similar to the American involvement with modern art through the CIA (which I will discuss later on this text), just as well motivated by fear of “Communist” sympathies in society. Source: Vuyk, Kees, “The Arts as an Instrument,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy*: Volume 16, Issue 2, 2010

2 In 2006, theater group Orkater and author Arnon Grunberg joined the Dutch troops in Afghanistan. Both are known as critical cultural producers, who would translate their experiences in Afghanistan by showing the ambiguities and paradoxes of war, the discrepancies between the command at home and the war “on the ground.” Interestingly enough, it is not despite but exactly because of this criticality that they were tolerated by the military. Through their presence, the artists prove the success of democracy as export product: its transparency and self-criticism go so far that the war is being criticized even at the moment that it is waged. This critique would however never stop it, but on the contrary provides its legitimation. This is how the artist performs its role as a “living statue of liberty.”

3 Ellul considers this state of total propaganda the moment when all resistance against the dominance of the Technological Society, which he believes has become the dominant condition of the western world at the end of the second Industrial Revolution, has ceased to exist: “Only when very small groups are (...) annihilated, when the individual finds no more defenses, no equilibrium, no resistance exercised by the group to which he belongs, does total action by propaganda become possible.” Source: Ellul, Jacques, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p.9

4 The concept of democratism first appeared in a piece of writing by Vladimir Lenin: “Besides the interests of a broad section of the landlords, Russian bourgeois democratism reflects the interests of the mass of tradesmen and manufacturers, chiefly medium and small, as well as (and this is particularly important) those of the mass of proprietors and petty proprietors among the peasantry” Source: Lenin, Vladimir, “Working-Class and Bourgeois Democracy” in *Lenin Collected Works*, Volume 8 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), p.72-82

5 Saunders, Frances Stonor, *Who Paid the Piper?* (London: Granta Books, 1999), p.57

6 Eagleton, Terry, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London/New York: Verso, 2007), p.xxiii

7 Fraser, Andrea, “How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction” in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 156

8 Source: Adding Hezbollah to the EU Terrorist List – Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, June 20 2007

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